

## **MINUTES**

### **MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 56th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION**

#### **JOINT APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT AND TRANSPORTATION**

**Call to Order:** By **VICE CHAIRMAN MIKE TAYLOR**, on January 28, 1999  
at 8:00 A.M., in Room 402 Capitol.

#### **ROLL CALL**

**Members Present:**

Sen. Mike Taylor, Vice Chairman (R)  
Sen. Eve Franklin (D)  
Sen. Ken Mesaros (R)  
Rep. Ray Peck (D)  
Rep. Joe Quilici (D)

**Members Excused:** Rep. Lila Taylor, Chairman (R)

**Members Absent:** None.

**Staff Present:** Lynn Daily, Committee Secretary  
Greg DeWitt, Legislative Branch  
Amy Sassano, OBPP

**Please Note:** These are summary minutes. Testimony and  
discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

**Committee Business Summary:**

Department of Transportation Budget  
Testimony  
- Maintenance  
- Transport Planning Division

**John Blacker, Director of Maintenance for the Department of  
Transportation**, speaks for the budget.

diverse area

- maintenance operations
- motor pool
- equipment
- land operations (radio)
- road reporting

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**EXHIBIT(jgh22a01):** Perceptions of Highway Maintenance in Montana in 1998: The Results of a Telephone Survey

- have been using when established budget
- took nearly 6,000 phone calls to get
- number one thing wanted winter maintenance

**EXHIBIT(jgh22a02):** General Overview of FTEs

- hire a lot of temporaries in the winter
- maintenance takes care of roads for next 30-40 years

LFD Issue on page A-88

- they have received a letter to use federal aid money on specific maintenance issues
- signing, striping

DP 1 - Rest Areas and Facilities Maintenance (page A-89)

- increase of \$733,194 FY00 and \$744,041 in FY01
- contract out all rest area maintenance
  - cleaning services
- tourism is a big issue and need to open up rest areas for year round services
  - Feb 15-Apr 15 they are closed
- have some new rest areas going on line
- water and sewer issues at Culvertson

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**REP. PECK** asks if all four sites that will be upgraded are on the Interstate. **Mr. Blacker** says yes. **REP. PECK** asks if they have any plans on Highway 22. **Mr. Blacker** says they do have a rest area plan in place. They also have a citizen advisory commission. **REP. PECK** asks is vandalism is a big problem. **Mr. Blacker** says absolutely.

**SEN. TAYLOR** asks why they don't build weigh stations in the middle of the road. **Dave Galt** says some places don't have enough room. It costs money to separate the lanes. **SEN. TAYLOR** asks if it saves money. **Mr. Galt** says the operating expenses would be less. They have one in Haugan, outside of Missoula. They are also doing this with rest areas.

DP 2 - Road Reporting/Travel Services (page A-89)

- recently moved into maintenance from director's office
- remote weather information systems
- 59 state wide
- gives temperature of the road, road conditions, chemicals on road, etc.
- money in this issue is for computers

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- only some interlinked and would like all interlinked
- have 1.5 FTE now
- work from 5 A.M. to midnight and during a storm all night
- have 32 lines coming in on 800 number

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. MESAROS** asks if on the installation of the weather reporting stations if state special revenue is used and is it federally mandated. **Mr. Blacker** says it was a three year program. They did about 1/3 state special and they rest was paid for by Federal-Aid money. It was 100% fully on line last year. They have a camera on McDonald Pass.

**SEN. TAYLOR** asks if they are going to cut some FTEs with all this technology coming on. **Mr. Blacker** says he is not going to say, but they are saving some money.

**REP. QUILICI** asks if they have any type of scanner on Homestake Pass. **Mr. Blacker** says they do not now, but they are looking at one.

***{Tape : 1; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 0 - 30}***

- DP 3 - Roadway Maintenance/Pavement Presv. (Page A-90)
- moving objective of expenditure
  - have a transportation awareness program
  - grass roots volunteer program by snow plowers and drivers
    - go to drivers education and service programs to talk
    - public awareness
  - contract with a number of cities to do signals
  - minor tools
    - change in budget process
    - now have and increase from \$3,000 to \$5,000

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. TAYLOR** asks when the people go out to teach these classes. **Mr. Blacker** says it is on off time, but during work hours they do allow comp. time and not every one does it. **SEN. TAYLOR** asks how much money they spend on small tools. **Mr. Blacker** says they can be from air compressors to a hydraulic jack to a car wash steamer. They don't spend a lot on screwdrivers and such and it is about \$100,000 per year. **SEN. TAYLOR** asks how they keep track of these things. **Mr. Blacker** says they had for many years had an inventory number that they inventoried every year. They require old things to be turned in to get a new one. **SEN. TAYLOR** asks what the loss factor is. **Mr. Blacker** says they know they are going to lose a certain percent.

DP 4 - Land Purchases (page A-90)

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- land sites in hand when they come in for long range plans
- 122 maintenance sites
  - replace about 5 per biennium
- yet to replace any site that is less then 50 years old.
- a lot of garages built 60 years ago are too small
- number of leases for stock pile sites
- sometimes try to do land swaps
  - Whitefish
- roughly 500 stockpile sites throughout the state

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. MESAROS** asks how many sites have a fuel storage facility.

**Mr. Blacker** says they have fuel storage at about 90% of the sites. Once they get a contract with fuel card with DOA they will get out of the storage business as much as possible. They are doing a pilot program in Miles City.

**REP. PECK** asks if they can go drive into a station and get contract with state or do they pay the same rate. **Mr. Blacker** says before they used to be tax exempt and they are trying to do it again. The EPA tried to fine them \$190,000 recently, but they were able to show documentation and the fine was suspended.

**{Tape : 1; Side : B; Approx. Time Counter : 0 - 27.7}**

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. TAYLOR** asks if they could fund this out of long range building planning. **Mr. Blacker** says they could buy land out of long range building planning, but it still comes from fuel tax.

**SEN. TAYLOR** asks when they did the budget did they adjust for a drop in fuel prices. **Mr. Blacker** says no. The fuel analysis will come out of the equipment program.

DP 5 - Winter Maintenance (page A-91)

**EXHIBIT (jgh22a03):** Chapter four: Highway Maintenance Program

- page out of joint legislation audit and review committee out of Washington
- have 19,500 lane miles of highway
- increase of \$466,760 FY00 and \$473,723 FY01
- for road salt and liquid deicer
- contract crushing sand and pay mobilization cost
- try to maintain a 3-year supply of sand
  - don't let it get below a 1 year supply in any area
- McDonald pass uses about 6,000 cubic yards per year
- mix between 4-8% salt in stockpiles to keep pile from freezing
- liquid deicer helps use less sand and get to places they couldn't get to before

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- do have an established standard between 4 states and  
British Columbia
- requires 70% less corrosive than salt

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. TAYLOR** states that he cannot drive Highway 93 one winter without replacing a windshield. There is a constant complaint and is there anything that can be done. **Mr. Blacker** one adjustment made in 1992 to a 3/8 minus. It had to pass through a 3/8 inch screen. They use the same specification used by 14 other states. The problem about going smaller is they can't put enough on the snow and ice to make a difference. They don't get traction. The rest of the 37 states use direct salt. Other issues with going smaller is they cost will be \$11 Million annually. This is 2-3 times more than now. The pre-wetting works better and they are now buying more sweepers.

**SEN. MESAROS** asks is there anything else besides pre-wetting. **Mr. Blacker** says they have done a number of things. They have bought zero velocity sanders. As you get smaller sand it grinds up into air particles. They put nearly 300,000 cubic yards of sand on the roads.

***{Tape : 2; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 0 - 30.5}***

DP 6 - Equipment Rental (page A-91)

- biggest part of increase is increase to equipment program because of TEA-21

DP 7 - Overtime and Differential Pay (page A-90)

- brings to about \$3 Million
- comfortable with \$1.6 Million per year

DP 9 - Noxious Weed Control (page A-90)

- over the past 4 years has had a line item in the budget of \$800,000 for noxious weed control
- contract with all county weed districts
- seems to be cyclical
- there have been years where the money was not used
- current law states that weed district has the authority to go out and spray and bill us

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. MESAROS** asks how this will be directed at secondary proposal. **Mr. Blacker** says none of this is associated with the take over of the secondary roads. The miles associated is about 28% more. The county is still going to spray. **SEN. MESAROS** asks how they negotiate with the weed districts. **Mr. Blacker** says they bring in all counties associated and all the weed districts

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supervisors. They allow each weed district to speak and they have a letter of understanding. The development approves their weed plans.

**SEN. TAYLOR** has a problem with this in his area. The state is losing \$100 Million because they are using gravel that is weeded. **Mr. Blacker** says they negotiate with the weed district to spray the stock piles. Missoula county doesn't allow spraying at all.

DP 13 - Maintenance Program FTEs (page A-90)

- asks for 2.5 FTE
- one associated with part of Highway 99 that runs from Malta north to the Canadian border
  - have been paying county to maintain and they are unwilling to do this now
- one is for the Billings area
  - maintenance miles
  - pass miles
    - HW 2 has a 24 foot top and needs three passes to clear with a snow plow
- in 1996 they had 578.93 FTEs to maintain 19,079 lane miles
- with technology they can now plow wider paths
- .5 FTE for road reporting system

**EXHIBIT (jgh22a04):** Montana's Highway System

DP 44 - Temporary Seasonal FTEs

- request for 26 FTEs
- 21 are in contracted services
- just talking about money probably around 150 people
- Lookout Pass is manned 24 hours a day 7 days a week
  - during the summer hours they have a 5-man crew
  - during the winter they have a 12-man crew
- additional 5 are associated with additional pass miles
  - wider roads

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**REP. PECK** asks what they do if they come on an accident. **Mr. Blacker** says they protect the scene of the accident. All are trained in CPR and first aid and many times they flag.

**{Tape : 2; Side : B; Approx. Time Counter : 0 - 28.3}**

DP 38 - Maintenance Manual (page A-92)

- currently have maintenance manual
- latest update into manual goes back to early 1980s
- very outdated
  - get sued quite often
- doesn't represent policies and technology to prevent problems

- \$75,000 to buy copyrights
  - getting disks from Wyoming and Colorado
- talks about how they plow roads and what they do
- for standardization of how they work

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. FRANKLIN** asks if Mr. Blacker thinks there would be a process of updating on a regular basis. **Mr. Blacker** says they have started the process of writing. Once written, the intent is to send out the updates to put into a three ring binder.

**Pat Saindon, Administrator of Transportation Planning Division,** speaks for the budget.

Transportation Planning Division (page A-106)

Do transmit planning, rail planning, responsible for long-term transit plan

keeper of data and statistics for department

collect vehicle data

responsible for enhancement program

have traffic safety program that works with local enforcement

policy and analysis group that work with 5-state coalition

- has been very successful

once projects are nominated run through division

responsible for programming all projects with federal government

do intelligent transportation planning

public involvement

DP 2 - Equipment Rental (page A-107)

- increase includes their share of increase in Equipment Program
- responsibility for inventory of all roads
- inventory each county
  - try to do 1/3 each year

DP 3 - Computer Equipment (page A-107)

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. MESAROS** asks what a portable traffic classifier is. **Mrs. Saindon** says it's the rubber deal across the road.

**SEN. TAYLOR** says they requested a traffic study. **Marvin Dye** says this is a small piece of the traffic study. The backlog has been significantly reduced. **SEN. TAYLOR** states that they are asking for 21 inch monitors. **Mrs. Saindon** says the are for three of the people in the division who sit at the computer all day long.

**SEN. TAYLOR** asks what they recycle time is. **Jim Curry** says they legislature has established a time of 4 years.

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- DP 9 - Urban Transportation Plan Updates (page A-107)
- \$120,000 FY00 and \$80,000 FY01
  - have 11 cities in urban program and update plans
  - added about \$110,000 each year that can only be used in three areas
  - continually update plans
  - now about 7 years old

- DP 10 - Equipment (page A-108)
- reduction

- DP 11 - Traffic Safety Program (page A-108)
- increase of \$250,000 per year
  - 100% federally funded
  - money in federal budget and are asking for the spending authority
  - can't be spent anywhere else

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. TAYLOR** asks how this ties into the Highway Patrol. **Mrs. Saindon** says they get some equipment from this program.

- DP 12 - Census Transportation Planning Pkg (page A-108)
- \$9,000 to purchase special software program
  - use in work they do, but distribute a copy to larger offices in cities

**New Proposals**

- DP 1 - Tranplan 21 FTEs
- request for 8 FTEs
  - hired after ISTEA was available
  - paid for out of contracted services
  - now with TEA-21 got substantial increase in funding

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. TAYLOR** asks at what point do these programs go away. **Mrs. Saindon** says they don't now unless there is a new bill. They knew ISTEA would end in 1997, but they kept it out of the base in case TEA-21 didn't come aboard.

**{Tape : 3; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 0 - 30.3}**

- DP 6 - FTA Local Match Pass-Through (page A-109)
- federal transit administration funds
  - funded out of TEA-21
  - required local government to put up a match

**Dave Galt** speaks for DP 13.

- DP 13 - STARS program (Page A-109)



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- state truck activities reporting system
- team effort idea
- spider web of weigh-in-motion devices that are in the pavement
- when they design pavement have to know weights and amount of trucks
- used to get weights from weigh stations and not very many overweight trucks stop at weigh stations

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**REP. QUILICI** asks where these 90 sites are going to be. **Mr. Galt** says 60 are going to be portable and set up for 48 hours. Seven are permanent and will be tied to weigh stations. They have one at Arlee, Ramsay interchange, Manhattan, Townsend, Decker Road, and all over.

**SEN. MESAROS** asks how they work. **Mr. Galt** says they are made up of a tube or pressure sensitive devise that reads into a box. One study they did was out of Lolo. They had a scale they couldn't maintain so they bulldozed it and set up a watch station. The number of overweight trucks was up and also the weight was up from 850 lbs overweight to 1,250 lbs.

**SEN. TAYLOR** asks if there is an economic expense to expanding weight. **Mr. Galt** says yes, but it is harder on the highway.

DP 16 - Digitize Montana Tourist Map (page A-110)

- Withdrawn

DP 28 - Pooled Fund Study (page A-110)

- request for \$35,000 for research funds for pooled fund studies
- will look at other issues that can be used in rural areas called Intelligent Transportation Activities
- some ideas will study
  - have problems in area where hazardous water raises and goes over the road
  - area where problems with fog
  - have remote locations where they have rest area and don't know if lighting has gone out

**Pat Saindon** speaks again.

DP 32 - Montana State Rail Plan (page A-110)

- last update in 1993
- looks at all railroad lines
- funding will come from federal rail administration
- have money and are asking for the authority to spend

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**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. TAYLOR** asks what they do with the study. **Mrs. Saindon** says they came out with a couple of recommendations. North Eastern Montana they have a railroad where they can only go 10 miles per hour. They can identify types of traffic moving on the railroad. They go out and meet with the grain terminals and get information from them. **SEN. TAYLOR** asks if the rail companies use this information. **Mrs. Saindon** says no, they know what they are doing. **SEN. TAYLOR** states that what bothers him is that the railroad is studying all the time. **Mrs. Saindon** would guess that they are not concerned with this information. They are concerned about what they can get down the track.

DP 35 - Accounting Change (page A-111)

- would like to get spending authority for \$75,000 per year

**EXHIBIT(jgh22a05):** Suggested language from Mrs. Saindon

**{Tape : 3; Side : B; Approx. Time Counter : 0 - 28.4}**

**Questions from Committee Members and Responses:**

**SEN. TAYLOR** asks why they don't have projects ready to go, projects on the shelf. **Mr. Curry** says the shelf project used to be organized and ready to go, but it was left on the shelf if they didn't get extra money. These were not necessarily the highest priority plans. They now have a 5 year plan. They look at priority and then go back and set ready dates in case some thing happens that the project will not go through. They now slip into the next projects ready date. They have never lost a dime of federal money. **SEN. TAYLOR** asks about the criticism that they have this money and are not pro-active with it. **Mr. Curry** says he has heard this before. They have projects in October and take them to the commission in December for approval. Then they go and do field reviews recognized a long time ago. They don't have space in the building for additional FTEs and there are not people there to hire. They have consultants pre selected. The information from TEA-21 only came a few months ago. **SEN. TAYLOR** asks how they are going to get local kids on these projects. **Mr. Curry** says there are a number of contracts. There is a contract at Salish Kootenia for heavy equipment operator training. **SEN. TAYLOR** says they are going to have a big buildup and all employment is going to come out of the state. He than asks how many jobs this is going to provide.

**REP. QUILICI** states that there was a problem with ASiMI. They needed 1,000 people and they had to get construction workers all the way from Canada. Yet with TEA-21 they are going to need about 7,200 people. Some of the Vo-Techs are looking at training

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them for this. **Mr. Curry** says the list of pre-qualified consultants are from all over the state.

**REP. PECK** asks what their best estimate of the full impact of funding is. **Mr. Curry** says it goes through 2003 and every state in the West received a 40% increase.

**SEN. TAYLOR** states a lot of colleges try to keep people at a four year college and not going to help technician. **Mr. Gilmore** says they have a very good two year program for drafting. They have three employees at MSU to higher 8-10 students that are they're top priority.

**REP. PECK** asks if the contractors have indicated to schools that they are going to have an increase in jobs. **Mr. Gilmore** says there is an increase across the board. **Mr. Curry** says California is in the process of recruiting 5,000 engineers. The department is losing people on the pay scales to Idaho.

**{Tape : 4; Side : A; Approx. Time Counter : 0 - 23.4}**

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**ADJOURNMENT**

Adjournment: 11:45 A.M.

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SEN. MIKE TAYLOR, Vice Chairman

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LYNN DAILY, Secretary

LT/LD

**EXHIBIT** (jgh22aad)